

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception

December 6, 1998

Thank you very much. The next time there will be three, and then four. *[Laughter]*

Hillary and I are honored to have you back again for another Kennedy Center honors. You know, the conviction that our land of liberty should also be a home for creativity in the performing arts goes all the way back to the very first President ever to live in this great house, John Adams. He wished for an America where, and I quote, "pomp and parade, shows and illuminations flourish from one end of this continent to another." Today, the illumination of our performing arts shines not only across the continent but, indeed, across the world as a life force of our free society.

Dostoyevski defined the mission of artists as "incessantly and eternally to make new roads, wherever they may lead." All the artists we honor tonight have traveled lifetimes across our stages, each in their own way, making those new roads. Their gifts of talent, heart, and spirit are joyous, indelible threads in the fabric of our national life. It is my honor to introduce them.

The Tonight Show has seen a lot of comedians come and go, but one night in 1963, a young man by the name of Bill Cosby took the stage and took the Nation by storm. His hilariously deadpan descriptions of Noah loading the ark with animals—*[Laughter]*—I still remember it, too; it was pretty funny—launched his career. But it was his deeply personal, universally funny caricatures of his childhood friends—like Fat Albert and Weird Harold—that made him famous. One critic wrote, "No comic ever entered a child's mind with so much empathy and gusto."

Bill Cosby's remarkable gift is to be able to look inside the human experience and all its depth and diversity and hold it up to the universal light of laughter, and in so doing, to allow all of us to return to our child's mind. For more than 30 years, he has made the ordinary business of life extraordinarily funny business—in best selling books like "Fatherhood" and "Time Flies," blockbuster movies like "Uptown Saturday Night," eight gold records, and, of course, there were some

minor successes in television along the way—*[laughter]*—"I Spy," "The Cosby Show," his new hit series.

Bill once said he wanted to make jokes about people's similarities, about what's universal in their experience and, in so doing, to bring us closer together. That is exactly what he has done. We thank him for the lessons and the laughter.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bill Cosby. *[Applause]*

The curtain parted, the painted face popped out, and "Cabaret" forever changed the musical theater. John Kander and Fred Ebb have given us dark and gleaming shows suffused with metallic melodies. Their musical left the happy days for the harder passages of our century—Germany at the decadent edge of the Nazi nightmare, a desperate dance marathon in the Depression era of Atlantic City, a jazz-age murder in Chicago, a jail cell in revolutionary South America. The New York Times wrote that they shook the ground under our feet—and they certainly set them tapping.

With "Cabaret," "Chicago," "Steel Pier," and "Kiss of the Spider Woman," Kander and Ebb took us a long way from "Oklahoma" and "South Pacific." It has been a relentlessly syncopated journey, with lyrical wit, musical drama, bold and lovely songs that infiltrate our minds and never leave. One of those songs, known to every American, has become the anthem of "New York, New York." *[Laughter]* After all, what good is sitting alone in a room when you can go out and see hit revivals of "Chicago" and "Cabaret"?

Fred Kander and John Ebb have entertained us, challenged us, and touched our consciences. Tonight we salute them for all the daring, all the shows, all the razzle dazzle.

Ladies and gentlemen, John Kander and Fred Ebb. *[Applause]*

Willie Nelson's music has been a part of my life—like everybody from my part of the country—for a very long time now. After years of campaigning, we can always identify, Hillary and I, with what it's like to be "On the Road Again." *[Laughter]*

Willie Nelson is like America—always in the process of becoming. He changed all the rules about what country music was supposed to be. The granite-faced, long-haired man of

the soil put down roots in folk, swing, pop, and rock and roll. And everywhere he went, he gave us something new. His songs are rugged and beautiful, raw and lilting; they're an individual, stubborn declaration of pride and hope amid a world of troubles. They're as restless as he is.

The American highway has been Willie Nelson's second home. In fact, I think that bus of his has gone more miles than Air Force One. *[Laughter]* When someone once asked him why he went into music, he replied, "I thought I could sing pretty good." Well, 200 albums and 5 Grammy Awards later, we know he was right.

A few years ago, the Texas Legislature declared July the 4th to be Willie Nelson Day. Let me say that tonight is Willie Nelson's night all across America.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Willie Nelson. *[Applause]*

Anyone who went to the movies in the 1950's knew the music of Andre Previn before they knew his name. From "Kismet" to "My Fair Lady," and 50 other films, his scores and orchestrations were the sounds of the silver screen, winning fans and Oscars.

For some musicians, this achievement might have been more than enough. But Andre Previn's hunger for great music could not be contained. The arc of his music is long, and he has soared across it. He has been called the greatest crossover artist since George Gershwin and, over the course of 50 years, quite literally, he has done it all.

As a jazz musician, he has jammed with the best, from Charlie Parker to Ella Fitzgerald. As a conductor, his repertoire ranges from Bach to Stravinsky to Frank Zappa. As a composer, he has blazed a new trail in contemporary music. His new opera, "A Streetcar Named Desire," which opened in San Francisco, is simply the latest challenge in a fearless career.

Andre Previn was 9 years old when his family left Germany to find refuge here in America. Maestro Previn, I'm here to thank you for giving so much to those of us in your adopted country.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Andre Previn. *[Applause]*

I'm happy to welcome Shirley Temple Black back to the White House. But I'm not

the first President to do it. She was 7 years old when President Roosevelt asked to meet her, to thank her for the smiling face that helped America through the Great Depression.

The price of movie tickets has gone up a little since then—*[laughter]*—but her smile hasn't changed, and Shirley Temple continues to be a household word for generations who weren't even born when she left the silver screen behind.

Let's face it. All little children are adorable, but how many can dance, sing, and act? She was the first child actor ever to carry a full-length A-list picture. She was the most sought-after star in Hollywood. Once, the New York Times hailed her as "the greatest trouper of all—greater than Garbo, Hepburn, and Ginger Rogers."

Shirley Temple had the greatest short career in movie history—*[laughter]*—and then gracefully retired to, as we all know, the far less strenuous life of public service. *[Laughter]* She did a masterful job as Ambassador, from Ghana to Czechoslovakia, where she made common cause with Václav Havel in the final, decisive days of the cold war. In fact, she has to be the only person who both saved an entire movie studio from failure and contributed to the fall of communism. *[Laughter]* From her childhood to the present day, Shirley has always been an ambassador for what is best about America.

Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Shirley Temple Black. *[Applause]*

Ladies and gentlemen, I just told Shirley's husband of 48 years, Charles, that I was watching one of her movies the other day, about the Civil War, and he said, "Yes, that's the one where she met President Lincoln." And she told me, "I didn't just meet President Roosevelt; I sat on Abraham Lincoln's lap." *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, this has been a wonderful night. I know we look forward to the honors. I thank you all for being here. And once again, let me thank our honorees for the great gifts they have given us. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:46 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript

made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Hillary Clinton.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Major Illicit Drug-Producing and Drug-Transit Countries

December 4, 1998

Dear _____:

In accordance with the provisions of section 490(h) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, I have determined that the following countries are major illicit drug-producing or drug-transit countries: Afghanistan, Aruba, The Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Burman, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Taiwan, Thailand, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

This year I have removed Iran and Malaysia from the list of major drug producing countries and designated them as countries of concern.

Iran. On the list as a major drug producer since 1987, Iran has been a traditional opium producing country, with illicit poppy cultivation well beyond the statutory threshold limit of 1,000 hectares. A United States Government review in 1993 determined that there were at least 3,500 hectares of illicit opium poppy until cultivation in the country.

Over the past few years, the Government of Iran has reported success in eradicating illicit opium poppy cultivation. We were unable to test these claims until this year, when a United States Government review found no evidence of any significant poppy cultivation in the traditional growing areas. While we cannot rule out some cultivation in remote parts of the country, it is unlikely that there would be enough to meet the threshold definition of a major drug producing country.

Although important quantities of opiates continue to transit Iran en route to Europe, the United States Government currently has no evidence to support a judgment that significant quantities of these drugs are headed to the United States. Therefore, Iran is not a major drug-transit country under section 481(e)(5) of the Foreign Assistance Act.

Malaysia. Although Malaysia's geographic location makes it a feasible transit route for heroin to the United States, as had been the case in the past, we have no indication that drugs significantly affecting the United States have transited the country in the past few years.

I have further determined that the following countries or regions are of concern for the purpose of U.S. counternarcotics efforts:

Netherlands Antilles. Though there is continuing drug activity taking place around the Netherlands Antilles, especially in the vicinity of St. Maarten, we have only anecdotal information that significant quantities of drugs bound for the United States are involved.

Turkey and Other Balkan Route Countries. I continue to be concerned about the large volume of Southwest Asian heroin moving through Turkey and neighboring countries (including Bulgaria, Greece, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Croatia, and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) to Western Europe along the Balkan Route. There is no clear evidence, however, that this heroin significantly affects the United States—as required for a country to be designated a major transit country.

Syria and Lebanon. I removed Syria and Lebanon from the list of major drug producers last year after the United States Government determined that there was no significant opium poppy cultivation in Lebanon's Bika' Valley. A review again this year confirmed that there is still no evidence of significant replanting of opium poppy and no evidence that drugs transiting these countries significantly affect the United States. The relevant agencies continue, however, to monitor the situation.

Cuba. Cuba's geographical position astride one of the principal Caribbean trafficking routes to the United States makes the country a logical candidate for consideration for the majors list. Interdiction operations elsewhere in the region are driving drug smugglers increasingly to fly over Cuba to drop cocaine into Cuban and Bahamian waters. This trend makes it important for Cuba to take effective measures to stem the flow and to cooperate with others in doing so.